

Choosing the **Right School** for you

1 Ask yourself why you want to go to college

- career preparation
- learning opportunities
- personal goals
- extracurricular activities
- family and friends

2 Decide what is important to you in a school

- type of school
- academic program and degrees offered
- location and size
- costs and financial assistance
- academic reputation
- sports or extracurricular activities

3 Get information about the schools you are considering from

- libraries
- college representatives, catalogs, electronic view books, web sites, and bulletins
- high school counselors and teachers
- family, friends, students, and alumni
- Internet sources, directories, and CD-ROMs
- working professionals

4 Research and compare schools

- make a checklist to compare pros and cons of each school
- make campus visits
- attend college fairs and meet with college representatives
- compare total costs in relationship to financial assistance packages

Remember

- Keep a copy of all completed forms and worksheets.
- Apply for private sources of financial assistance. You must reapply for financial assistance each year you are in school.
Talk to the financial aid office about:
 - federal, state, institutional, and private financial assistance programs;
 - changes in personal and family income; and
 - financial assistance delivery and tuition payments.
- Maintain eligibility for financial assistance by enrolling at least half time and making satisfactory academic progress.

When making a campus visit

- tour the campus
- talk with students
- meet with an academic advisor or a faculty member
- research your academic program
- meet with an admissions counselor
- verify admission requirements
- meet with a financial assistance representative
- determine the actual cost of attending the school
- inquire about a class visit
- tour residence halls and eat in a dining hall if you are planning to live on campus
- tour the town

5 Make your decision

- make a final visit to your top two choices
- talk with your parents and counselors
- select a school that meets your needs and preferences

6 Comply with all deadlines

- admission and housing applications
- required institutional fees
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial assistance forms



The Missouri Department of Higher Education administers a variety of federal and state grant, scholarship, and loan programs. MDHE makes every effort to provide program accessibility to all citizens without regard to disability.

For more information about student financial assistance, or if you require this publication in an alternate form, contact the MDHE Information Center at (800) 473-6757, option 1; (573) 751-3940; 3515 Amazonas Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65109; or www.dhe.mo.gov. Hearing/speech impaired citizens can call (800) 735-2966.

Preparing for College

An Academic Year Calendar

August

- Review your career plans and decide which type of school is right for you.
- Request admissions information and school catalogs.
- Review school web sites.
- Obtain registration materials and test dates for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and/or American College Test (ACT).
- Start developing a financial plan for college.
Contact MDHE to obtain information about financial assistance at (800) 473-6757, option 1 or check out our web site at www.dhe.mo.gov

September

- Meet with college representatives who visit your high school.
- Mark your calendar with registration, admissions, and financial assistance deadlines and fees.
- Ask employers, teachers, and guidance counselors for letters of recommendation to include with your admissions applications.

October

- Take the SAT and/or ACT.
- Work on admissions essays.
- Visit your top school choices. Make appointments with faculty, staff, and students.
- Contact the schools' financial aid offices to determine which forms are required. Some schools require special forms.
- Finalize portfolios, audition tapes, writing samples, or other evidence of talent if required for admission.

November

- Attend college fairs and financial assistance nights.
- Obtain financial assistance forms from your high school counselor. Determine what information is necessary to complete the forms.
- Begin completing your admissions applications. Double check the deadlines for submission.
- Follow up to ensure letters of recommendation are sent.

December

- Pick up a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at your high school counselor's office, your local library, or a college or university. **DO NOT SUBMIT BEFORE JAN. 1.** You can complete the form online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Keep a copy of the form.
- Research and apply for other financial assistance.
- Finalize your admissions applications. Many schools have online application processes. Keep a copy of all forms you submit.

January

- Submit your FAFSA to the processor as soon as possible after Jan. 1. **DO NOT SUBMIT BEFORE JAN. 1.** You can complete the form online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Keep a copy of the form.
- Look for financial assistance awareness programs in your area.
- Ask your parents to file their tax forms as early as possible. Schools may need them to finalize your financial assistance packages. Be prepared to send a copy of the tax forms to the schools, if necessary.

February

- Research taking Advanced Placement (AP) or College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams.
- Rank your preferred schools.
- Ask your high school to send a copy of your transcript, including first-semester senior grades, to the schools to which you have applied.

March

- Submit tax forms to the financial aid office, if requested. Find out what outstanding items need to be completed for the financial aid office.
- Narrow your school choices, and make campus visits.

April

- Watch the mail for school acceptance and financial assistance award letters. Compare the packages based on the various costs.
- Make your final school decision, and mail any deposits required.
- Check with the school you've chosen about returning financial assistance award letters.
- Notify schools you will not be attending.
- Watch for other important school deadlines.

May

- Take Advanced Placement exams.
- Be aware of any summer orientation sessions that you must attend at the school in which you will enroll, and make plans accordingly.
- Finalize any summer job plans, and make a plan for saving a portion of your summer earnings.
- Prepare a realistic student budget using the MDHE budget worksheet located at www.dhe.mo.gov/mostars/budgwh.htm.

June

- Plan for college orientation, transportation, and housing.
- Follow up with the financial aid office to ensure all paperwork is complete.

July

- Finalize plans for school.
- **Contact the MDHE if you have additional questions about funding your education at (800) 473-6757, option 1 or check out our web site at www.dhe.mo.gov**